10: d'Orleans--320 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 291, 437, 443, 551

[LSS: in Luang Prabang] "... We were overrun by a troop of female hawkers, who settled themselves down in our quarters and spread out their wares for sale. These women all wear the same sort of dress, namely a silk petticoat with a scarf to match, some of them having their hair cropped close after the Siamese fashion, which is a very ugly one. After a few days we get quite familiar and call these young ladies by their proper names. They either have some name which indicates their sex, followed by the qualification of small, pretty, or what not; or else they bear the name of some good quality, such as peace, happiness, prosperity, jewel. The same saleswomen came back every day, asking an exorbitant price for every article and not showing any inclination to rebate it. However, they are very good-natured in the bargaining which follows, and seem as well pleased if they do not effect a sale as when, after a long discussion, we end by making a purchase."

10: d'Orleans--320-321 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 411, 438, 443, 778

"They [LSS: women merchants in Luang Prabang] have a very diversified stock of goods to choose from, including gold embroidered shirts made by the Lus, Siam brocaded vests, old silver, bracelets made of Kas bronze, and hatchets and other weapons in old bronze; these latter are very scarce and difficult to buy, as they are preserved with superstitious reverence by the families to which they belong. The hatchets, some of which are straight while others are curved, are very characteristic, while the ivory-handled knives represent yaks, the genii of the Buddhist religion, [321] similar to those which are found in the interior of Borneo."

10: d'Orleans--325 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 347, 363, 443

"In front of us is a broad avenue, lined with fine trees, which is perpendicular to the river, and is intersected at a distance of a hundred yards or so by a road which runs parallel to the Mekong. This is the main street of Luang Prabang, upon the two sides of which the market is held morning and evening. The animation is greatest in the morning, when, for a distance of more than half a mile, there is a long row of small booths, some of which are rather lofty, and are surmounted by a roof of bamboos, while others are very close to the ground. These booths are the rendezvous of the whole population, of the bourgeoisie, of the mountaineers, of the bonzes, of the working classes, and of the villagers."

10: d'Orleans--326-329 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 439, 443

[LSS: in Luang Prabang] "The shops and booths contain the various products of the country, such as articles of food, strong condiments, rice cakes, jam, and all that is required to make the quids of betel-nut, barks of red wood, native shirts, scarves, flowers for the pagodas, earthenware pans, iron implements, small pigs of lead (from Ban Lathane, one or two days' sail up the Mekong), and a variety of other local goods. In addition to these, there are the articles imported either [pages 327 and 328 contain illustration] [329] from the North or the South. From China come opium, musk, tea, vermicelli, and the felt carpets with a white pattern which are brought from Tali, and which I had seen before when travelling in Thibet; from Burmah green and red boxes of lacker work such as one sees in India; from Bangkok and Xieng Mai European shoddy goods, muslins and stuffs, red silks with the mark, 'Manufactured in Lyons, France,' with calicoes sold for about sixpence a yard, imitation jewellery, sleeve links, garters, thread, needles, Japanese matches (sold for fourpence or fivepence per ten boxes), scribbling paper, condensed milk and a host of other articles, all either of English or of German make, the only French articles which I came across are a few bottles of ink and buttons."

10: d'Orleans--330 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 443, 651, 177.44 Siam
636.44

[LSS: in Luang Prabang] "In the market, each vendor has his own special stall, while the representatives of the same trade are all placed together, and a tax of twenty-five cowries is collected from each of them every morning by soldiers told off for the purpose, whereas the street hawkers are exempted from all dues."

10: d'Orleans--344-345 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 443, 527, 556

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"We pay an early visit to the market and find the streets crowded, the women being attired in their finest things, and being loaded with bracelets and necklaces of gold, while the market itself is full of [345] birds in cages, which it is considered to be a very meritorious act to purchase and let loose. This Laos custom is very general among the Buddhists, and I remember seeing at Batang a Chinese soldier who, as he caught his fish, put them into a bucketful of water, the Thibetans giving him money at the close of the day to put them back into the river."

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Europeans are beginning to come to Laos for the purpose of engaging in commerce. They generally settle on the banks of the Mekong.

Large business houses in Cambodia and Cochinchina support various enterprises with their money. They provide an outlet for the natural products which they assemble, and supply their agents with merchandise for exchange. The latter operate in the following manner. They have touts who range over the interior of the country with a stock of imported articles which they sell or exchange, in whole or part, for local products. At certain times of the year, generally after the waters go down, temporary markets spring up at fixed points, generally at the Mekong's junctions with its chief tributaries. The middlemen set up their merchandise, and the producers come from the interior to make trades, purchases or sales and to acquire the objects which they need and which neither the country nor local industry can supply. Oftentimes also the producers do not have to move about, and the buyers come and find them in their villages.

In addition to these small markets there are larger ones such as those of Luang-Prabang, Paklay, Vien-Tiane, Nong-Khay, Oubone, Bassac, etc., where the touts and small tradesmen bring their regional products. It is in these centers that merchandise accumulates, and it is from here that it leaves for the great markets in neighboring countries and for [423] [Illustration] [424 [Blank page] [425] the ports. Here too the small retailers lay in new supplies of imported products which will be sold in the course of the year for daily consumption in the muongs and villages.

The present organization of commerce in Laos is harmful to the interests of the producers, in the sense that the temporary markets where exchanges are effected are highly scattered, with no link between them, and are often quite remote from the larger centers. The result is that a few import traders lie in wait at the crossroads to the interior or else go into the interior and dictate to the natives, who are ignorant of the value of the trade commodities as well as of that of the country's products in the larger centers. They profit from this state of affairs in order greatly to increase the prices of imported merchandise while at the same time undervaluing local products among the natives. At the present time the latter are therefore at the mercy of these small ambulating merchants, who are in league to fleece them.

Measures should consequently be taken to remedy these conditions, that is to say to defend the economic position of Laotian producers, our nationals, against the rapacity of the merchants--

439 almost all Chinese, the masters of the markets--who scour the country
441 and leave behind none or almost none of the profits which they ex-
tract from it.

443 Might not the administration establish, for example, periodic fairs under its supervision which would be held in certain suitably chosen spots? Under its direction market prices would be posted and placed within everyone's ken, and the daily market price could be found of import and export commodities on the nearest large markets and even on coastal markets. Producers would thus gain correct information on the value of their merchandise and would be in a position to decide whether it was to their advantage to operate locally or to go further on before making their transactions.

The question would still remain of giving strong encouragement to private initiative with a view toward the establishment of repositories or emporiums equipped to handle the natural products of the country in wholesale or retail quantities. Such [426] trading posts or factories could compete with the present-day traveling merchants by offering higher prices and also supplying imported goods on more favorable terms.
175 The French Syndicate of Laos [Syndicat français du Laos] made a be-
441 ginning in this direction as early as 1890 and 1891 by establishing its factories at Luang-Prabang, Nong-Khay and Xieng-Hong and later on, in 1892, at Bassac and Outhene, thus distributing factories spaced along the great river over an extent of nearly 2000 kilometers. The guiding idea of the promoters and stockholders of the Syndicate was that its agents should above all else be precursors and pioneers of a fertile idea, just as its counters should be landmarks for future and lasting establishments to be created after their example and beyond their initiative. Once this task had been accomplished, however, the pioneers dispersed and the landmarks so successfully placed were not utilized.

439 Yet isolated attempts made in recent years by several of our
441 countrymen have not always, it must be confessed, been crowned with
443 success. Without special commercial aptitudes, without either the necessary capital or credit and consequently not able to supply themselves at first hand, and restricted by the system of customs now in force in Indo-China, they have not succeeded in all their operations despite their real efforts and their unquestioned good will. Neither should we lose sight of the fact that commerce in Laos should not seek its chief profit in the sale of imported products, but rather in the exportation of a few selected natural products such as sticklac, benzoin, cardamom and rubber, among others.